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EXCLUSIVE | Correction commissioner, Mayor Adams show Rikers Island security videos in effort to counter federal monitor's claims of misdeeds

am By Dean Moses

Posted on June 9, 2023



THINGS TO DO IN NYC

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Tomorrow, 10 am

Fall-O-Ween

New York Botanical Garden



Oct. 13, 7 pm

Twin City EP Record Release Party at
Penthouse (Open Bar)

The Chelsea Penthouse



DOC Commissioner Louis Molina shows video from incidents cited in Nunez Independent Monitor report.

Photo by Dean Moses



Oct. 22, 10 am

Pet, Play, n' Pick!

📍 Joan & Alan Bernikow JCC



Oct. 22, 11 am

Let's go to the videotape.

That's what the city Correction Commissioner Louis Molina and Mayor Eric Adams say in response to the Nunez Independent Monitor's damning report last week about the Correction Department's alleged inability to properly care for and report on the welfare of inmates in their custody.

Courage and Creation – A Family Day for "Courage to Act"

📍 Museum of Jewish Heritage



Oct. 22, 11:30 am

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📍 College of Staten Island

Disputing the federal monitor's findings, Molina and Adams shared video with amNewYork Metro that, they argue, amounts to proof that the report is not completely accurate.

The Independent Monitor lambasted the city and DOC in a 21-page document that accused top brass of failing to report deadly and near-fatal incidents inside city jails, such as Rikers Island, while also failing to properly act in order to save lives to the best of their abilities.

This is something DOC Commissioner Molina and Mayor Adams believe is erroneous.

The mayor and corrections commissioner presented several surveillance videos to amNewYork Metro of the recent tackling of one inmate, and the response to a suicide attempt, during a visit this week to Rikers. The Correction Department maintain that the videos demonstrate that their officers did not employ unnecessary use of force or acted inappropriately — countering charges made in



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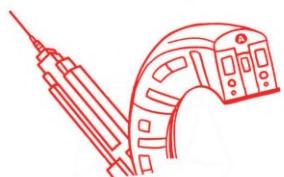
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However, the DOC — citing privacy issues — did not release the videos to amNewYork Metro for independent publication. We were, however, able to photograph still images of the videos in certain instances.

Even so, Mayor Adams opined, the screening was an “unprecedented” move by the city to demonstrate transparency regarding conditions on Rikers Island.

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A jail on Rikers Island.

Photo by Dean Moses

"We took this unprecedented step to say, 'Look at these videos, and then look at the allegations and what we're doing here,'" Mayor Adams said.. "We just believe [the release of the monitor's report] caused a level of uproar that was unfair to the men and women who are here and the inmates who are trying to serve their time. It created the wrong message."

Molina stood in a conference room on Rikers Island on June 8 and walked amNewYork Metro through the videos of interactions between inmates and correction officers in which he adamantly denied his officers committed any wrongdoing.

In one video that took place on May 11, 2023, a man in custody — identified in reports as 41-year-old James Carlton — attempted to flee



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from an elevator before being stopped and taken to the ground by correctional officers. The man was turned on his side and handcuffed before being placed on a gurney and taken to have a body scan in order to check for weapons.

Once the scan was complete, the video appeared to show the man strike an officer in the head with his knee as the guard attempted to place the prisoner's shoe on his foot, prompting other officers to again try and restrain him. During the scuffle, the man was taken to the ground where it appeared he hit his head and went limp.

After being taken to the hospital, it was discovered that Carlton had been paralyzed from the neck down.



A piece pf video.

Photo by Dean Moses

The Nunez report denounced DOC for its use of force



Forest Hills Stadium to host food and music festival next weekend



Bay Ridge prepares for milestone 50th anniversary of Third Avenue Festival

during the incident and for a lack of communication with the monitor. But Molina fired back, stating that the man attempted to escape and then assaulted an officer — leaving correction officers no choice but to try and restrain him.

“He had a pre-existing health condition that may have been aggravated from the situation, but he is in this situation because one, he tried to escape; and then two, he assaulted the officer,” Molina added. “We are not aware of pre-existing health conditions because it’s privately protected information.”

In another incident that occurred on May 14, a man jumped from the stairwell in his housing unit in an apparent attempt to take his own life.

A nearby officer who was playing dominoes with another person in custody — an interaction which Molina says is intended to build a rapport between the staff and those serving time — heard the impact and called for aid. The individual was rushed to

a hospital and died a few days later.



DOC Commissioner Louis Molina shows video from incidents cited in Nunez Independent Monitor report.

Photo by Dean Moses

Molina argued that staff can only work with the knowledge they have at that moment. While it became clear later that the incident was an intended act of self-harm, at the time he says the officer was unsure of what had exactly taken place.

The monitor criticized DOC for not reporting on the incident until 33 hours later.

"I recognize that what they're talking about is notifying our command operations desk that this incident happened. Leadership knew that this was happening because there were telephonic notifications," Molina said. "We had activated a medical emergency so Correctional Health Services was aware of

the situation, so people knew. What they are talking about as an administrative notification to the command operations desk. It wasn't made timely, and we're investigating why that notification was delayed. But we were very well aware as a leadership team that this incident had occurred."

Molina also stated that under his leadership numbers are trending in the right direction with slashings and stabbings being almost 30% less year-to-date in 2023, while he stated that in 2022, despite the penal population increasing, DOC decreased use of force by 14%.

He also didn't pull any punches when it came to the de Blasio Administration, calling it incompetent.



Mayor Eric Adams and DOC Commissioner Louis Molina.

Photo by Dean Moses

"What they had from 2016 to 2021 was exhausted

mediocrity, combined with incompetency, and that incompetency was allowed to thrive from 2016 to 2021,” Molina said. “That’s why we find it absurd — I find it absurd — that the monitor believes that we do not want to collaborate, that we do not want to communicate. We communicate with them on a regular basis.”

Sitting beside the commissioner, Mayor Adams declared that when the monitor released its findings, he immediately demanded to see the footage but said he feels it showed the opposite of what was reported.

“They [the monitor] indicated that we were making improvements, basically moving in the right direction. Now you had five incidents where there was a communication question, a communication question that turned into now we have a dangerous condition and unsafe practices, something that’s just not accurate,”

Adams said. “I called the commissioner and said ‘Let me see the tapes that caused the monitor to feel that way.’ I looked at the tapes and said

'there has to be more' because clearly, those tapes do not indicate dangerous conditions and unsafe practices. It actually showed just the opposite. We saw professionals, great discipline, great patience, and treating people in a way I would expect someone to treat if I was the commissioner of this agency."

Dean Moses

Dean Moses is the Breaking News Editor at amNewYork Metro and resident photographer. He covers NYPD, crime, homelessness, and anything breaking news.



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